

Sybil's Bones, a Chronicle of the Three Hiram Bingham

Alfred M. Bingham

I

I first heard about Sybil when my father took me to see her grave in the old New Haven City Burial Ground. The Grove Street Cemetery, as it was commonly called, was not far from the Yale College Chapel, where our family went on Sundays, so I suppose that it was after a service that my father walked us over to see where his grandfather and grandmother were buried.

My father was not a religious man, but, as a College professor, at a time when attendance at chapel services was compulsory for all students, he may well have felt it incumbent on him, a supporter of the establishment, to attend Sunday services, when he was not off exploring in Peru, and he would have had an uneasy conscience if he had not given me and my brothers at least a grounding in the religion of his missionary ancestors. Moreover, the College invited the country's most prominent preachers, without much regard for doctrinal or denominational purity, to its pulpit, so his own skeptical theism was not offended. And he must have enjoyed the prominence of the family pew at the front of the faculty section, where his six-foot-four-inch frame, flanked by my mother and several small boys, was visible to the whole student body.

It would have been a five-minute walk from the Battell Chapel steps on College Street, with its slowly melting group of departing worshipers, to the Cemetery. The setting today is unchanged from what it was then, sixty years ago. On one side of Grove Street is the vast bulk of the University dining hall or Commons, the rattle of dishes in its kitchens next to the sidewalk alone disturbing the quiet of the Sunday street. At one end of the Commons, where College Street diverges gently to become Prospect, the street on which we lived, was the rotunda entrance to both the Commons and the University auditorium, Woolsey Hall. At the other end of the Commons was the blankly beautiful marble "tomb," in purest Ionic, of a college secret society, and, across from that, the great Egyptian gateway to the Cemetery, over which was inscribed in letters visible a block away: THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED.

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Whether, on that first visit, I considered the incongruity of all this variegated architectural splendor in contrast to the simple elm-shaded graves of New Haven's colonial patriarchs inside the cemetery, or pondered the meaning of the resurrection, is doubtful, but I know I found my great-grandfather's gravestone less impressive than I expected. His name, in capital letters, HIRAM BINGHAM, was clear enough, and since it was also my father's name, I took it for granted. The rest of the inscription, to the effect that he "and his associate Asa Thurston were the first preachers of the Gospel to the heathen of the Hawaiian Islands" was not of the stuff to interest a small boy, even if the letters were more legible than they are today; still, I recall a sense of slight annoyance, which I may have caught from my father, at the intrusion of Thurston's name to share the honors. What did impress me was the fact that Hiram Bingham had two wives. That seemed of sufficient oddity to be worth recounting if occasion arose.

Two wives, two similar slabs of marble, each, naturally enough, some inches shorter than their husband's—and one of them was Sybil's.

My father seemed to take a certain melancholy but possessive pride in the stones, as he explained that his grandfather had married again after Sybil's death, but all I remembered was what a queer name Sybil was and how the name of wife number two, Naomi, was even queerer. It was not till I was a grandfather myself that I learned why my father had such a proprietary interest in Sybil's bones. He had, in fact, brought them with him in his personal luggage when he had come to Yale as a freshman some twenty years before.

My own interest in them dates from the movie version of Michener's *Hawaii*. Michener had made full use of the first Hiram Bingham's missionary record, *A Residence of Twenty-one Years in the Sandwich Islands*. The novel had obviously patterned its principal missionary character, Abner Hale, on an amalgam of Hiram Bingham and Asa Thurston, but Bingham was so much the dominant if not domineering character as to leave the major impress on the imaginary Hale. Sprightly Lucy Thurston, on the other hand, was more likely the model for Michener's beautiful heroine, Jerusha, than plain, conscience-ridden Sybil, if only because she too had written a book, while Sybil's story was locked in her diaries and in many scattered letters sent around Cape Horn between 1820 and 1840. At any rate, in my middle-aged reaction to the movie, I found Julie Andrews' depiction of Jerusha Hale so entrancing that I transferred all her charm to my side of the missionary family. If Sybil had not been my great-grandmother, and I had not been middle-aged, I would have fallen in love with her—or at least with Julie Andrews.

So, on a romantic impulse, I took the next occasion to visit her grave in the Grove Street Cemetery. I was astonished to find only two stones where I had looked for three. There was HIRAM BINGHAM, as firm and straight as ever, and beside him the small stone of his "relict," the upstart Naomi, but nothing more—only a smooth area of turf between Naomi and the asphalt drive, and beyond that, outside the fence, the rushing traffic on Grove Street.

Had I then dreamed about being shown her grave by my father some fifty

years earlier? Was it only something he had said about his grandfather's two wives that led me to conjure up a mental image of two similar slabs of marble? I checked the records in the Cemetery office. The records did indeed show Sybil M. Bingham buried beside Naomi Morse Bingham, but unlike the listing of Hiram and Naomi there was only one date opposite her name, 1792, her birth date according to the family genealogies, with no year given for her death; and Mr. Munson, the Superintendent of the Cemetery acknowledged that he was "at a loss to even guess what could have become of the stone."

His records showed the graves were in a plot that belonged to the United Church, one of the three landmark churches on the New Haven Green, and the one nearest the County Court House where Bobby Seale was tried about this time for murder of a fellow Panther. I consulted the church records. I learned that only Naomi of the three Bingham had been a member of that church and thereby earned the right of burial in its plot, not only for herself but for her husband. He had died in 1869, five years before his "relict." But Sybil had died twenty years earlier, according to the family records. She was never a member of the United Church. Hiram was, after all, a "Reverend" and denominational loyalty to a retired Congregational missionary might have admitted his bones to this hallowed ground, even without Naomi's membership. But Sybil had no claim at all. And would Naomi have welcomed her sainted predecessor?

It occurred to me that Hiram might have extracted a promise from Naomi that after his death his first wife's remains would be brought from wherever they might be and re-interred beside him, and that, after his death, Naomi quite naturally balked, though the place for Sybil had been reserved. But the church, no more than the Cemetery Superintendent, could not tell me whether Sybil was really buried there, and, if so, what had happened to the grave marker.

By now my curiosity was thoroughly aroused. Curiosity may be a family trait. My father, after all, had been an explorer—in fact he listed his principal occupation as "explorer" in *Who's Who* even after he became a United States Senator—and if my urge to find "something lost behind the Ranges" took the form of searching old cemeteries, it might still be an inherited impulse.

The Bingham Family in the United States told me that "HIRAM BINGHAM" (the name again showed up in capitals) the "7th child of Calvin" had first married "October 11, 1819, Sybil Moseley, dau. of Pliny Moseley and sister to Judge Daniel Moseley of Westfield, Mass.," and went on to say simply: "She d. Feb. 27, 1848, at East Hampton, Mass., aged 56." Well, I thought, if she died in East Hampton would she not have been buried there, or perhaps in nearby Westfield, where she was born, in some Moseley plot?

It would, I felt, have been ridiculous for me to make a special pilgrimage to Massachusetts just to search cemeteries for my great-grandmother's grave, but when other business found me in Springfield it took no further excuse to explore the graveyards of nearby Westfield and Easthampton (as it was spelled on my road map). I still had the image of lovely Julie Andrews in my mind's eye.

It was no use. I found no trace of Sybil's last resting place. Even in the weed-grown old burial ground off Mechanic Street in Westfield's factory district, where I made out the names of Pliny Moseley, who died in 1810 "at 62 years of age" and of Abigail his wife, who died in 1788 at 30, and of "Mrs. Sophia Moseley, relict of Pliny," Sybil's mother, who died in 1811—leaving 19-year old Sybil an orphan to support herself as a schoolteacher, while other relatives took care of her younger sisters—even in the old family plot, there was nothing to indicate Sybil had ever been laid beside her parents.

Ten miles away, Easthampton, unaccountable West as well as South of Northampton, seemingly half asleep in the vacation period of its famous old Williston Academy, yielded little further information. At the Town Hall there was indeed a listing of the death of Sybil "wife of Rev. Hiram Bingham" on the page marked February 27, 1848, but the cemetery yielded no clues.

I knew from some correspondence of my father's I had seen that Hiram and Sybil had found a "refuge" in Easthampton with "kind friends," and that there Sybil had died, though it was not till later that I learned why it seemed a "refuge." I also knew that my father's father (whose name was also Hiram) had attended Williston Academy. I looked up the school's archives. Long a boys' preparatory school it has now merged with a girls' school and is known as Williston Northampton School, but in its earlier days the Academy had admitted girls as students, and I was surprised to learn that two of Sybil's daughters were enrolled at the school with Hiram, the only son, at the time of Sybil's death. Also in the school's archives I found correspondence between its founder, Samuel Williston, and the Rev. Hiram Bingham.

Samuel Williston, it seemed, had played an important part in the lives of my missionary forebears, and, both consciously and unconsciously, in the disposition of Sybil's bones. The school's archives revealed some details, and, as my curiosity led me on, further details of the Bingham family's benefactor came to light.

Williston's father, a clergyman, was, it appeared, an early supporter of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This was the Protestant body, primarily Congregational and Presbyterian, that all through the 19th century had sent out missionaries, including Hiram and Sybil Bingham and later their son and daughter-in-law, to the ends of the earth to evangelize the heathen. Samuel Williston was brought up to believe a missionary's was the highest of callings, but his eyesight and perhaps his nerve failed him, and he made a fortune in the manufacture of cloth-covered buttons instead. He salved his conscience by giving lavishly to the A.B.C.F.M. and less lavishly to individual missionaries, as well as founding the Academy that bore his name, and donating substantial sums to Amherst and Mt. Holyoke Colleges. In addition to helping the Bingham family after their return from Hawaii he had adopted two of the eight children of another mission family, the William Richards, who had been brought back and left with relatives or friends, as were so many mission children including two of the Bingham family, to be given a New England education.

It was the bombardment of the Richards' mission home at Lahaina on the

island of Maui in 1827, by a whaling ship's crew furious at the missionaries' attempt to deny them their accustomed visitations by island girls, that furnished the historical basis for a particularly lurid episode in the movie version of *Hawaii*. Hiram and Sybil had been visiting the Richards at the time, and, as Hiram later described the episode in his book: "We took our wives and tender babes to the cellar, and looked up for protection to Him whose shield was still over us."

A number of Hiram's letters to Williston were dug up for me by the school's archivist. They usually included, along with gratitude for past generosity, suggestions for helping other, sometimes rather grandiose, missionary endeavors. It does not appear from some surviving account books of Williston's that these appeals met with much success, and it is indicative of the humiliations this unemployed missionary, once the virtual ruler of Hawaii, had to undergo that among the "benevolences" Williston listed for 1846 and 1847, along with \$10,000 given to Amherst, appear the following entries:

Cloak to Mr. Bingham, value	\$15.00
cash to Mr. B.	5.00
one bbl flour to Rev H. Bingham	7.75
Sundry other things	3.25

More valuable to the Bingham than these items, no doubt, was the opportunity offered to three of their children (two had died in infancy in Honolulu, and two had been sent back around Cape Horn a few years before), who had been living with various relatives and at different schools through years when the family was homeless, to attend Williston Academy together, and to have them at last under one roof; yet that was a bitter time for the family, as I found out, for their mother was dying, and their father had had to give up hope of returning to the one job he knew.

What Sybil's last years had been like I gathered from diaries and letters of hers and Hiram's that I found among the vast collections of papers they and their fellow missionaries had left behind them. (The voluminous files of A.B.C.F.M. are now at the Houghton Library at Harvard, while the Bingham family papers are at Yale and other collections are in the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library in Honolulu. My sporadic explorations have gradually taken me to all these rich lodes.)

Life in the Paradise of the Pacific was anything but healthy in the years when Honolulu was a village of grass huts on a dusty plain. Sybil was frail to begin with, if one can judge from her likeness in the portrait of the Bingham painted by Samuel F. B. Morse (of the Morse code and telegraph) before their departure for the Pacific: where an idealized Hiram gazes confidently from the little oval frame, Sybil's long thin nose and watery blue eyes make her look as if she had a cold.

Actually it was Hiram who had a cold when their arranged meeting took place at his ordination in Goshen, Connecticut, early in the fall of 1819. But she had made up her mind to be a missionary, and if the only acceptable means

for a girl was to go as the wife of a missionary she was ready, whoever the missionary might be.

Two weeks earlier, on her 27th birthday she had confided to her diary, as many times before, her concern for her "guilty soul," but she pledged anew her devotion to the "service of that blessed savior through whom all flows" and went on to express her deepest hope:

Should I dare to pen a request for the year, if life be continued, it is that, wholly unfit, unworthy as I am, God would be pleased of his wisdom to fit me—I vow my desire strongly forth—and of his goodness to open a door for me among the heathen.

The door was already open. Hiram had just been refused by the only girl he knew who might consider sacrificing her life for the benighted heathen, apparently at the insistence of her father, the Rev. Samuel Shepard, a Berkshire village clergyman who did not think the pursuit of happiness was necessarily to be condemned. But Hiram had faith that the Lord, if not the A.B.C.F.M., would provide. Whosoever the hand, it did provide in the form of Sybil. Within a month Hiram and Sybil were married. Another two weeks and they were seasick together on the high seas, beginning the 18,000 mile journey to Hawaii.

The private diary was laid aside during that crowded autumn and the next entry, after penning her prayer that the door be opened, begins as follows:

Jan. 15th, 1820.—Conversation of a nature tender and interesting with my beloved friend in the silent hours of last night did deeply affect my heart. I desire to renew my resolution concerning my deportment towards this tender husband.

1st. I resolve that if moments occur when I cannot feel exactly with him in what may concern us, I will call to mind his attainments in the path of holiness beyond me, and set a guard upon my lips that no unkind word wound his feelings.

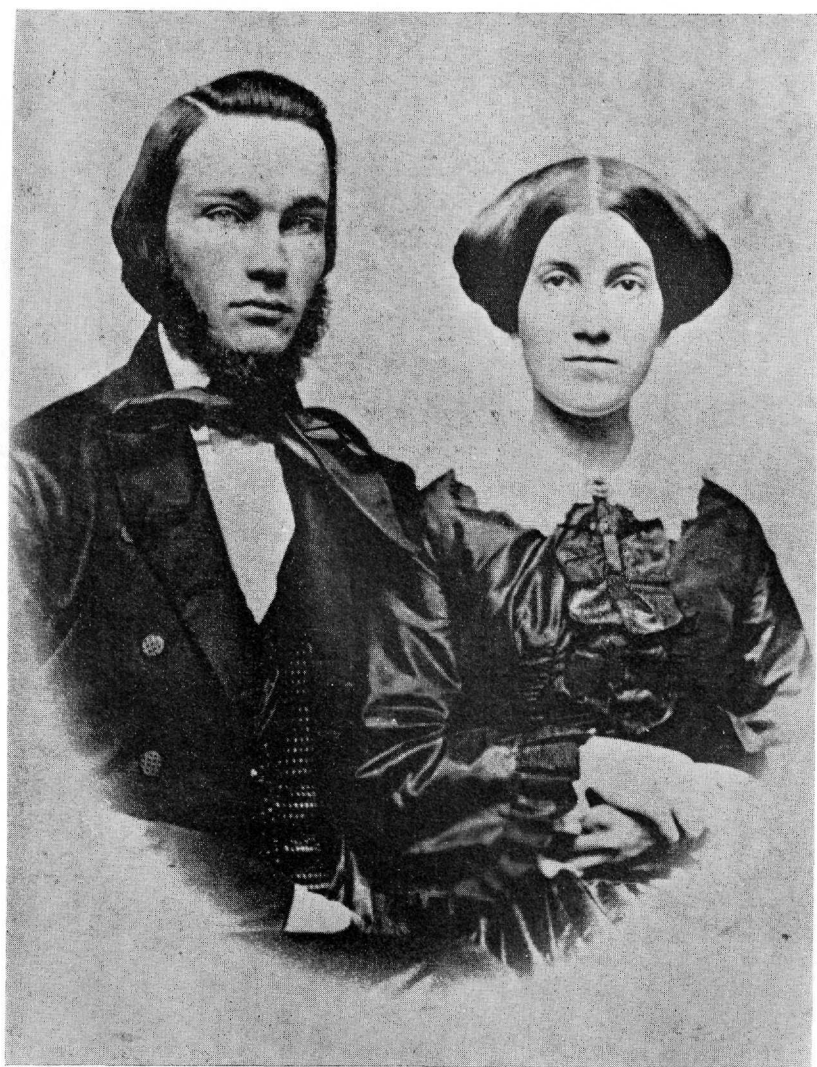
2nd. When I see that which (since in the flesh one is subject to infirmities) may want amendment, I will be faithful in my endeavor to exert a salutary influence to correct it, studying for the kindest manner in giving such reproof and exhortation as my sober judgment shall deem important.

Sybil had not been a schoolteacher for nine years for nothing. But she had been a wife for scarcely nine weeks. She had much to learn about the domineering but "tender" Vermont farmer's son who was now her "beloved friend." She had moments of despair and terror, as I learned in going through the cramped pages of the diary where she wrote her secret thoughts—for her own eyes alone and those of her jealous God. (She kept another diary to send back to her sisters.) She prayed that she might be saved "from idolatrous affection, enabling me at all times to say, whom have I in heaven or earth that is once to be compared with *Thee*."

Yet, for all her worship of the "friend" with whom she found herself able to "reciprocate conjugal tenderness" (Sybil and three of her newly married

Hiram Bingham and Mrs. Bingham (*Sybil Moseley*)
Portrait, 1819 by Samuel Finley Breese Morse; Yale University Art Gallery; Gift of Hiram Bingham.





"sisters" became pregnant on the five months voyage), his continual prayers for the heathen must occasionally have irked her. For, tucked between the pages of her diary, at the point where the brig *Thaddeus* had "doubled" Cape Horn, is the nearest thing to a love letter from him to her that has been preserved. On the inside of a discarded envelope he had written what he had not the courage to say aloud, something between an apology and a confession:

Think not for a moment, dear S., that I wish to reproach or grieve you in the least, but allow me to think my faithless and unworthy prayers can be of little avail to anyone; though if I pray at all, I hope that I do not always forget the friend who is dearer than myself. H.

On an adjoining page of her diary she wrote:

I did not intend the reproof for him alone, myself was also included, but he received it so, and his heart is melted. Yet I trust it is wounded but to be healed. The command to us is to be holy. May we never cease aspiring to help each other to the work, however much it may cost nature. Compassionate Savior, thou wilt assist each joint endeavor.

The next entry was a month later, two days before they sighted snow-capped Mauna Kea. The terrible five months voyage had taken its toll and she felt "weak and faint." But she prayed her Savior, who by this time must have much resembled Hiram in her mind's eye, as she wrote:

Thou meltest my heart by the kindness of my beloved husband whose tenderness towards me thou causest to increase daily, filling the tender names my heart has loved, in one, that of *bosom friend*. But, O my Savior, be Thou pleased to take the throne in my heart, and while I reciprocate his faithful love, let there be no idol there!

For twenty years she worked with him and for him and bore his children, but the cost to nature was a wasted body that finally came to seem to Hiram more important than his mission.

By then it was too late. Hiram anticipated that a few months rest in what they considered the more healthful climate of New England would put her on her feet, and they would return to carry on the great work with which the Mission Board had originally charged them. In their eyes they had gone far to achieve the goals set for them: "Nothing short of covering those islands with fruitful fields and pleasant dwellings, and schools and churches, raising up the whole people—a nation to be enlightened and renovated and added to the civilized world."

Returning to New England in 1841, Hiram confidently set about telling the world of their accomplishments, not only the Prudential Committee of the Board (which had by that time sent seven more shiploads of missionaries, including twenty-six ordained clergymen and eighty-seven others, to support the pioneer mission); but also the churches, mostly in New England, that supported the Board; and men of piety and wealth who gave to the cause;

Hiram Bingham II and Mrs. Bingham (*Minerva Clarissa Brewster*)
Taken in Boston, probably in 1866. Courtesy of Alfred M. Bingham. Reproduction by Gordon Sweet.

and even President John Tyler and Secretary of State Daniel Webster, telling all and sundry about the importance of the Hawaiian mission, its achievements and its needs.

No doubt he felt it was *his* mission, and there was no little personal pride when he presented to Congress a copy of the Bible printed in the Hawaiian language: he had led in the reduction of that language to writing and in the translation itself. He set about writing the history of his "Residence of Twenty-one Years," which he believed would not only be a popular success but would bring additional wealth to the missionary cause and give him and his family an independent means of support.

When at the end of his book he summarized "what the Lord had done for the nation in respect to government, education, morals and religion" he knew he had been the Lord's chief instrument:

The constitution and laws, the production of a people so recently barbarous, whose first lessons in their own language had been printed but eighteen years, may be pointed to as a monumental record of advancement. The Bible entire, printed in two editions of 10,000 copies each, and welcomed by the nation, as another; six boarding schools, 12 station schools and 357 common schools, embracing 18,000 scholars, as another; and as another still, the establishment and enlargement of eighteen churches to the light and glory of the land.

And as a final summation these words:

The age of darkness, of wars, of infanticide, and of human sacrifices had passed away, and the age of schools, of wholesome laws, of Bibles, of spiritual sacrifices, and revivals, had come.

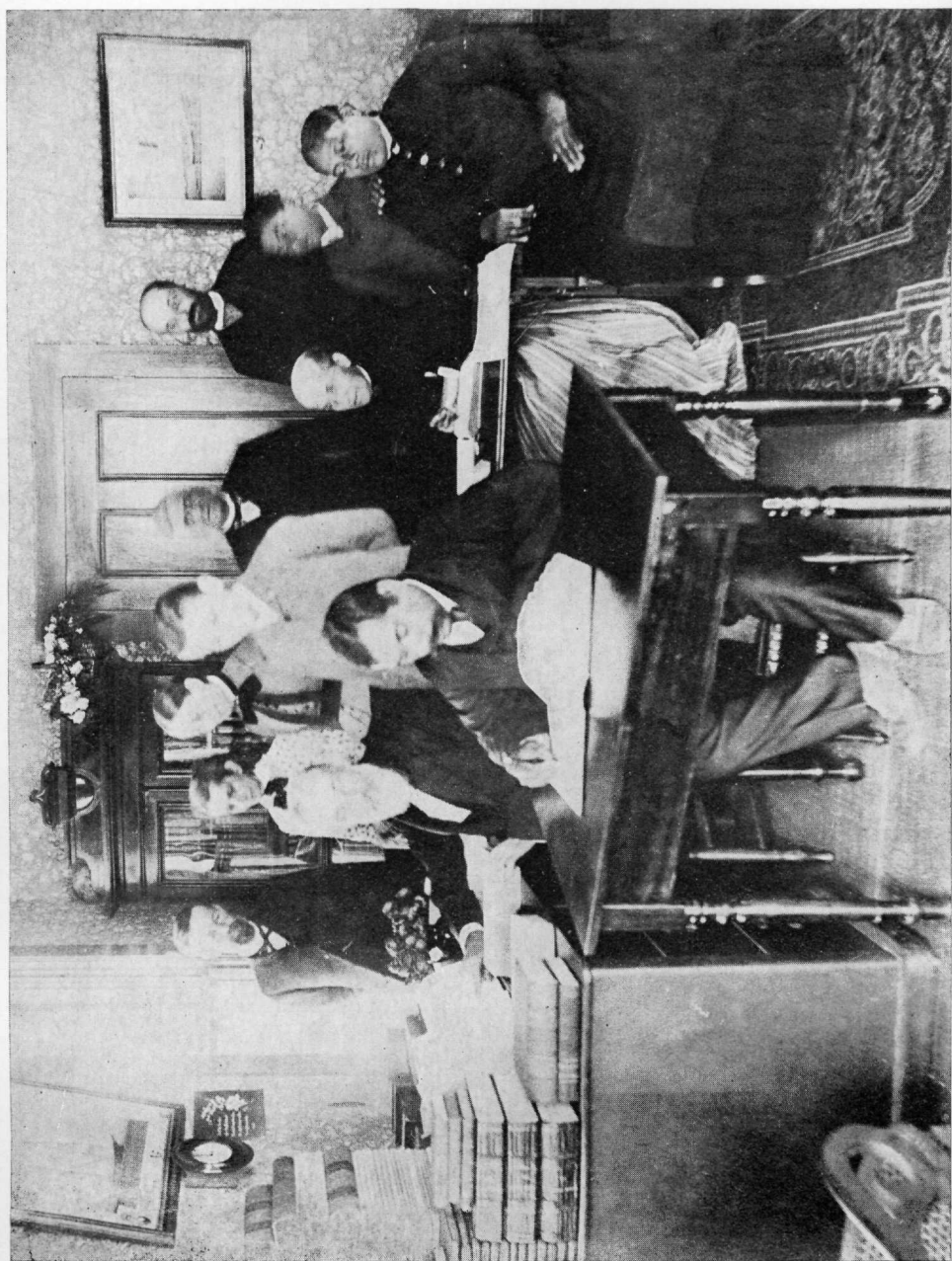
Whatever contrary evaluations might be made, both then and now, both in the islands and in the homeland, it was a noteworthy achievement. Nowhere else could missionaries point to the transformation of a whole nation, at least in so short a time. It was, of course, a small island nation, and the missionaries had moved into the vacuum of an old culture already far gone in decay. Still, the mission had been a phenomenal success. And Hiram's open letters urging the churches of America to go on to "evangelize the world in the shortest possible time" and "to extend the gospel to these 600,000,000" did not seem too far-fetched, at least to him.

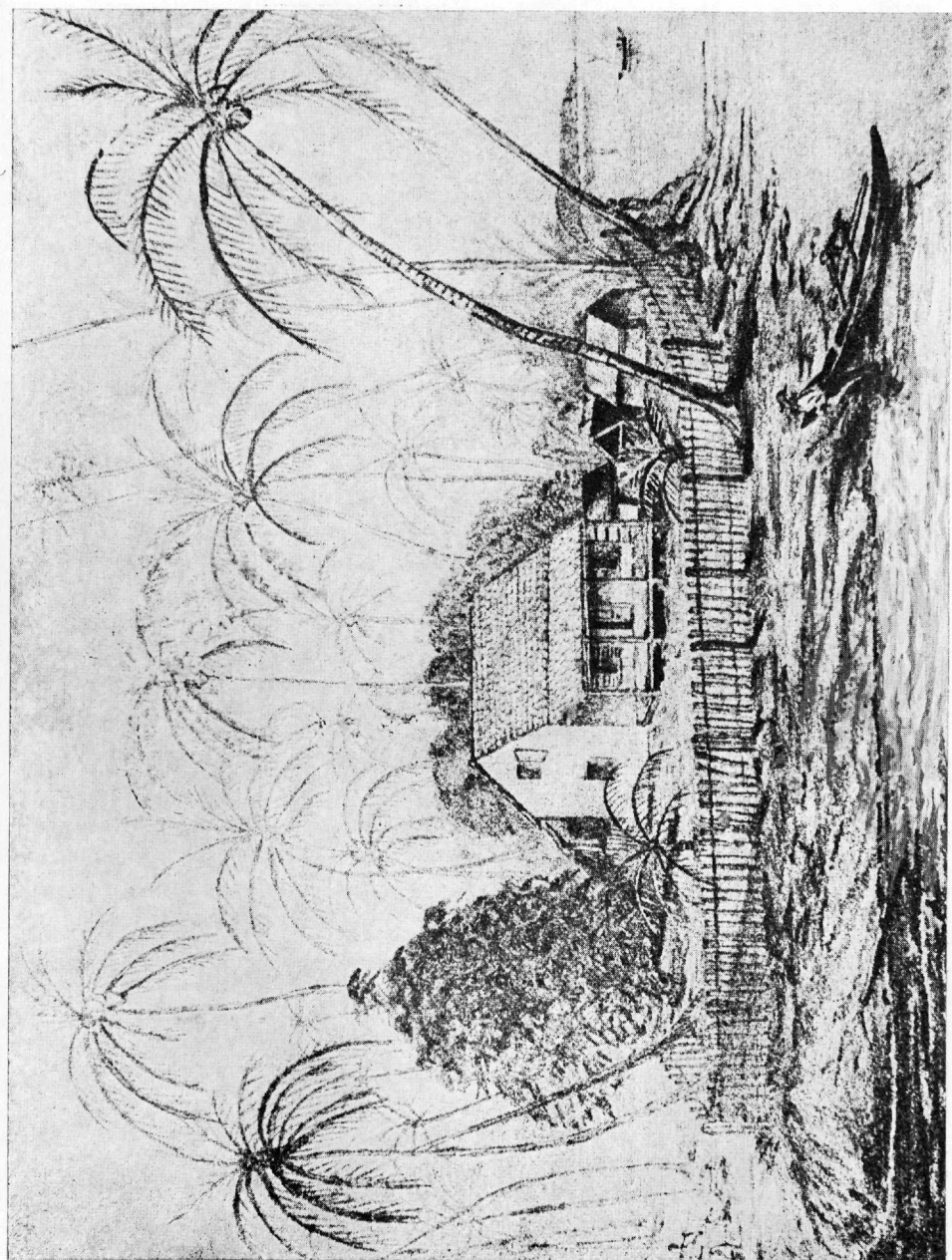
As the brief furlough he had envisioned lengthened into months and years, his confidence in himself and his cause began to wane. The A.B.C.F.M. had heard enough complaints about the domineering character of its pioneer missionary—not only from the China trade merchants and whaling ship masters on whose financial contributions they were heavily dependent, but even from the latter missionaries, who had found Bingham's continuing assumption of leadership intolerably arrogant.

Hiram Bingham II dictating the translation of the last verse of the Old Testament on the morning of April 11, 1890; and so completing his version of the Gilbert Islands Bible, begun at Apaiang in February, 1859.

Seated: Mr. Bingham, Mr. Moses Kaure, Mrs. Bingham, Mrs. Kaure.

Standing: Mr. A. F. Cooke, Miss E. Bingham, Mrs. L. B. Coan, Hiram Bingham III, Rev. C. M. Hyde, Mr. F. W. Damon, Morning Star Kaure.





Sybil's health did not improve. It became increasingly evident that she would never be able to return. Hiram fought on for five years, writing his book, traveling about the East, preaching and exhorting where anyone would listen, accepting the hospitality of relatives and friends, placing his children in a succession of schools, and carrying on a voluminous correspondence with his children, with friends and supporters, with publishers, with the mission itself, and with the Secretaries of the Board on whom his fate depended. Sybil, committed to their "joint endeavor," went along while her waning strength lasted, to Boston, to Brooklyn, to Philadelphia, to upstate New York, to New Haven, to Norwich, to Boston again, then to Hartford to be nursed by her sister. She had a chronic cough. Whether she or Hiram knew it, she was dying of the prevailing malady, "consumption."

By the end of 1846, five years after their return, their world had collapsed.

The Prudential Committee of the Board, hard-headed businessmen, however pious, had discreetly sounded out Hiram's fellow missionaries as to whether they wanted Hiram back. The answer was No. "He assumes too much." He was "too much disposed to take precedence." Even his old friend, Levi Chamberlain, the Board's Honolulu agent, gave his opinion that Bingham's return is "on the whole undesirable" and "the majority of the mission" would be of this opinion.

At its September meeting, held in New Haven, the axe fell. The Board voted \$800 "for the use and comfort of Mrs. Bingham," but "dissevered" them both from its employ and "commended them to the churches." A couple of weeks later Harpers, the publisher on whom Hiram had counted to bring out a big edition of his 300,000-word history, returned his manuscript. He had counted on the book, not only to advance the cause but to contribute to the support of his family and himself.

Two despairing letters date from this time. One is Hiram's dated October 23, 1846, and addressed to "Rev. R. Anderson, D.D., Sec. A.B.C.F.M. My dear Brother." It thanks him, almost too fulsomely, for the \$800 grant, and acknowledges that upon hearing the "kind terms in which our dismission was entered, my whole frame was convulsed with emotion." He went on:

A minister near me, as soon as I could attend, whispered, "The churches love you, and, ten years hence, will love you more." It *may* be so. May a merciful God grant that their love and confidence may not be forfeited.

With his hopes of a commercial publisher dashed, he had to accept the only alternative available, an offer from a Hartford printer to put out an edition of 4000 copies "by subscription," which meant that Hiram would have to sell that number of copies in advance.

For some ten days before and after accepting the terms I suffered as keenly as for any ten days of my missionary life. I could not rest. My health was affected. A paroxysm

"Happy Home," Apaiang. Home of Mr. & Mrs. Hiram Bingham II, Gilbert Islands, 1857-1865.

*From an original sketch attributed to Hiram Bingham II.
Hawaiian Mission Children's Society.*

of my old bilious affection recurred. Fears that the cause of missions might fail of the benefits I had contemplated oppressed me.

He could not have known how many of his fellow missionaries disliked him. No doubt he attributed his dismissal to Sybil's failing health. Perhaps he had her death in mind when he clung to the hope of going back to "the church and people once under my care, should it be possible for me to go again." He must have known she was dying.

This day is the twenty-seventh anniversary of that memorable day when we together stepped on board the *Thaddeus* for our long voyage and missionary campaign. She has been a true missionary, a firm friend of the Board and of the heathen, and a faithful counsellor, and in my dangers, toils and trials, she, with what she calls a *feeble spirit*, has stood by me with undaunted courage, and pursued her work with unflinching patience, and is the same in spirit as on every former anniversary of our embarkation, having a heart large and buoyant, a mind clear and cheerful yet sober, a soul trusting in God and habitually looking upward. Her eye looks with calmness today on the blood-streaked expectoration from the lining of her lungs, which admonishes us of the frailty of her frame, though she is up from morning till night, and ready to labor or to suffer, or to be dismissed.

The other despairing letter is from Sybil herself, to her married daughter Sophia, and is dated "North Haven, Ct., Dec. 20/46." She tries to sound cheerful and thanks God as always for his manifold blessings, but the picture of life in boarding houses, while Hiram is off in New Haven, seeking "winter quarters," or in Hartford making final arrangements for the printing of his book, is grim.

I thought we should have found winter quarters by this time, and I should have made full report of matters and things. But I must not sit here in this condition—fire all out in my stove—chamber cold—fingers numb. I have a foot stove with chestnut embers in it, or I could not stand it. So good night.—Will just say—I am all alone—your dear father in New Haven—went yesterday—returned the evening before from Hartford, to which place he went up in the cars Tuesday morning—no calculation in my mind but for his return in the afternoon train; but instead of that it was Friday afternoon, while not a syllable could I have, tho' the cars passed regularly, each way, twice in 24 hours. They were days of disquietude.

The next day she continued the letter.

Another day finds me comfortable. In great mercy the nights are generally made comfortable to me. As the day dawns I begin my work of hard coughing, but then strength is given me to get along with it, and find my place with others at breakfast table, then more or less coughing, till noon. Not a day escapes—hardly any variation—occasionally someone will say, "It seems to me you cough harder than common today." But I can't tell—perhaps they chance to hear me more. I am looking for your dear father by the next train. One train has passed along from New Haven. I am expecting that he will find some place for us to board, and if so that we leave here today.

She goes on to say that they had come to North Haven seven weeks earlier hoping to board with a farmer who might allow them milk, but no farmer wanted to take in boarders, and the family where she has been staying, "with four hungry children, the fifth in arms, around a small kitchen table," can only afford to buy half a pint of milk a day and "one pound of cheese in the month."

The letter is continued two days later after they have moved to a New Haven boarding house, at the corner of York and Elm Streets. She ends with the expected prayer that "You all may have evidence of the Divine Spirit's regenerating work in your hearts, uniting in Jesus as blessed friend and Savior."

This was the time of Mr. Williston's "benevolences." He may have admired Mr. Bingham, but he had more personal feeling for Sybil, with whom he was connected on her mother's side of the family. He must have realized what it meant for her to have her children forever scattered, living with relatives, off at distant boarding schools as pensioners. With his button factory a success and his fortune growing, he had recently founded in Easthampton, his home town, the "Seminary" that bore his name, and built himself a handsome mansion next door. He arranged for the admission of the three younger Bingham children, and helped the family find a house nearby to rent.

And so, for the last year of her life Sybil had a home, and three of her children with her.

II

It was Sybil's only son, Hiram, Jr., then fifteen years old, who made the final arrangements with Mr. Williston for renting the house in which his mother died a year later. Actually Hiram was her third son, but the two born in the early years of the mission had died in infancy. This third son—and sixth of seven children—may not have given thought to why he, and not one of his two brothers, was given the name of his redoubtable father. But there was enough in the choice of name to throw some light on his mother's early life and character. And now that he and his infant brothers all lie under the same turf behind their father's great stone church in Honolulu, a later descendant may speculate about those babies' names.

The first was Levi Parsons Bingham, born December 31, 1822, died January 16, 1823. "Nine days we folded it with sweet and tender affection to our bosoms," Sybil wrote her sister,

rejoicing in its health, its growth, and fair promise. We gave him the name of our much beloved, deeply lamented brother, Levi Parsons, and, suffering our thoughts to run a few years down the vale of time, we said, "Perhaps, treading in the steps of him whose loved name he bears, he, too, shall be among those who, on the mountains of Jerusalem, shall lift up the standard for Israel's return". Our hearts rejoiced in this our pleasant child, while we desired to acknowledge God's superior claim. Sixteen days after He gave, He asked for the surrender of the precious gift.

They had named the baby after a fellow student of Hiram's at Andover Theological Seminary, a young man fired by the same zeal to save the souls of the heathen as brought Hiram and Sybil together. From the records it appears that he had been picked by the Mission Board to preach the gospel at the very fountain-head of his religion, in the Holy Land itself. Sybil, whose ambition for years before she married Hiram had been to give her life to save heathen souls, was first engaged to Levi Parsons, and it seems more than likely

that when she made that entry in her diary on her 27th birthday about hoping "the new year would open a door for me among the heathen," she was thinking of Jews and Arabs and Turks as the heathen whose souls were to be saved. For Levi Parsons was then about to sail for the Orient.

But the Prudential Committee of the Board had decided that, while missionaries to the Sandwich Islands would have to be married, missionaries to lands under Turkish rule must be single. I doubt if Hiram ever knew about Sybil's earlier engagement, any more than Sybil knew about Hiram being rejected by Sarah Shepard a month before he met Sybil. But their youngest daughter, Lydia, writing up her mother's life years later, reported that a fellow-student of her father's,

designated to the mission in Palestine, to which it was not thought wise by the A.B.C. F.M. to send married men, had told him that if he were allowed to take a wife, Miss Sybil Moseley would be his choice.

In Michener's *Hawaii* the beautiful Jerusha had been engaged to a dashing whaling captain before she married Abner Hale. The real Sybil seems more likely to have waved her sad farewell to another missionary, as she was rowed out from the Boston wharf to the *Thaddeus*. Levi sailed a month later. After a year of language study in Asia Minor he established himself in Jerusalem, "near the Holy Sepulchre" according to the missionary record; but about the time that Sybil, on the other side of the world, was becoming pregnant for the second time, Levi, on a side trip to Egypt, fell ill and died. News of his death must have reached the Bingham's shortly before the birth of their first son. So he was named Levi, and not Hiram, Jr.

Another year went by, and another pregnancy, and with the birth of another son still another name intruded: Jeremiah. Jeremiah Evarts was the Treasurer of the A.B.C.F.M. when the mission was sent to Hawaii, and now as Corresponding Secretary it was he on whom the missionaries depended at the end of the long life-line around Cape Horn, so it may have been prudence as much as affection that led the Bingham's to name their second son after him. But "My little Evarts" as she called him, "my cherished babe," lived only sixteen months.

The next two children were girls, and it was not till 1831, twelve years after her marriage, that the second Hiram was born. By that time the Bingham's had a home of their own, an adobe cottage up Manoa Valley given them by Queen Kaahumanu, and Hiram's early memories were of lush greenery and a mother at last able to give some attention to her children. Even the stern missionary father working on his translations was not altogether forbidding, if one can judge from the following mini-sermon preserved in the "Occasional Journal for the Children" in which he entered moralistic jottings for their edification:

31 Oct. 1839. A little boy sat down to a nice breakfast with his parents and sisters on a beautiful morning in the charming sweet valley of Manoa where the cheerful birds sing and the green vegetation smiles around very pleasantly, and yet this little boy put on a very sour face amidst it all, and grieved his parents, and his little sister cried for the

fly brush and the elder sister withheld it from her so the silly children disturbed the beautiful morning that God had given the family in that very delightful place.

Sybil was even then a semi-invalid, and the next year they left for the United States. That six months sea voyage was the last time the boy saw much of his parents till he entered Williston Seminary. The 293-ton barque *Flora* with twenty passengers, eight of them missionary children, and with a cargo of sugar, molasses, hides, arrowroot and raw silk, was a good place for intimacy if not privacy, and the "Occasional Journal" reports the following after almost five months at sea:

Barque *Flora* Dec. 26, 1840

Lat. 18. south

Lydia said, "I want to be a good girl, and love Jesus Christ, and obey you, and love my mother, and make one another happy." (Lydia was six the day before.)

Hiram went to the maintop of the *Flora* with his father. He recited also a page of Emerson's arithmetic, second part.

27. Hiram began to read the Book of Deuteronomy. He says he thought in the morning, when he was half asleep, that he was a naughty boy to disrespect his mother so much as he had done, that he felt discouraged, and did not wish to live in this world any longer, but to go to heaven.

28. Hiram said he thought the same thing again, and he was serious through the day yesterday. In the evening he went with his father to the main top and they had some good conversation together.

Arrived in Brooklyn, nine-year old Hiram was shipped off to relatives and then to a succession of schools willing to take a penniless missionary's son, and from then on his contact with his parents was mostly by letter.

He kept many of his father's letters, particularly after he was more permanently installed in the home of Mr. Amos Smith, a New Haven schoolmaster, who no doubt retained a share of the few dollars (eventually \$60 a year) allowed by the Mission Board for young Hiram's education. These letters, still to be read in the Yale Library, within a few blocks from where they were first read and treasured, are gentle and affectionate, in surprising contrast to the abrasive quality of some of the letters Hiram, Sr. wrote his fellow missionaries in those same first years after his return.

There is moral preachment enough, to be sure, in the first letter of the collection, when he wrote

I want to know that you love Jesus and are trying to serve him, trying to praise him, trying to please others and do them good, and preparing as well as you can to be useful in the world.

But even in that letter the emphasis is on "trying," and in the following letters there is far more evidence of concern that his children are homeless because of his own failures and frustrations than of concern for their morals. It was Sybil, if one can judge from the occasional postscripts she added to her husband's letters, who worried more over the state of her boy's soul. Perhaps that was why such letters as she was well enough to write, were not preserved.

In one area young Hiram showed signs of independence. Significantly, his father seems to have been more tolerant than his mother, when he wrote:

Your good mother has more than once spoken of your filial resignation and compliance with your father's wishes in consenting so willingly to have your hair cut so short as it was, while some even of the young gentlemen in college wished to wear theirs five or six times as long. . . . A student or speaker should not have hair so long it distracts him.

The issue of length of hair was not settled for good. A couple of years later young Hiram, now fourteen, brought up the subject again. His father had always been clean-shaven and worn his hair short, but he said that he considered length of hair and beard to be a matter "indifferent to God," only the boy should try to please others rather than himself. He had no small ambition for his son: "The world is to be reformed!" he wrote.

Many thousand active minds, such as yours is capable of becoming, need to be employed to remove the moral, mental and bodily maladies which now prevail so extensively throughout the world.

Now in his fifties, he saw the years slipping by, his wife an invalid, his mission interrupted, perhaps never to be resumed, yet the goal of evangelization of the whole world was very real, and immediately attainable. With Hawaii "won for Christ" he saw China as the next field for conquest, and there he could imagine his son, "the teacher of the Emperor of the Celestial Empire as your father was of the kings and queens of the Sandwich Islands."

Still, the need to have a family home, if not to live in, then for Sybil to die in, finally took precedence over dreams of saving the world. To young Hiram, not yet sixteen, was delegated the responsibility of finding a home to rent in Easthampton, with Mr. Williston's help.

His father wrote him from Brooklyn, in a letter dated April 19, 1847, that he had heard from Mr. Williston.

The principal question seems to be about getting our scattered family together in such a way as to benefit the children and comfort dear mother and promote the health, happiness and usefulness of the whole.

Mr. Williston says there are several chances of hiring a house, or several rooms in a house, at Easthampton if I apply *soon*, but I cannot very well leave my work here just now. [The deadline for finishing the proof-reading of his book was three weeks off.]

You have once proposed to have us run you as an "*express*" and here is a chance to begin. I should like to have you see Mr. Williston and his seminary, and have you look at the house and the apartments which Mr. Williston has mentioned. You may hire your board at about \$1.25 per week [he first wrote \$1.50, but crossed it out] and begin upon the garden to raise our summer vegetables, and thus wait for the rest of us.

As to your puppy—perhaps you had better sell him to somebody, or give him to the Sanford boys, or perhaps to Mr. Smith, if any of them want him. You may perhaps have promised yourself some pleasure in the company of your little dog, though I fear he would be a source of care, mortification and expense. It may cost a little self-denial for an hour to part with him—but I am confident that one manly effort to break away and rise above it, and please your parents and guard your reputation would be followed by more pleasure than any dog can give you. You can try it at any rate.

The boy must have parted with his puppy, for in his father's next letter, after praising him as a "pioneer" for the way he had carried out his assignment and, with Mr. Williston's help, found a house "in the precincts of the Seminary," and indicating that it will be some weeks before the family can move in, he goes on to say:

It is natural that you should *feel lonely*, if neither hand nor mind find full employment. You have had a vacation of about three weeks. Now if you think yourself able to study two or three weeks more, you can take hold of Greek and composition or any other study at the Williston Seminary till the vacation there. You can practice your music some [Hiram had been given an old flute by a New Haven friend, which his father had gone to considerable trouble to have put in playing condition], and write to your sisters and aunts or cousins, for recreation.

In June, at last, his parents and his sisters Lizzie and Lydia arrived and for a few months the dream of a family under one roof was realized. But Sybil was failing fast. Even her religious faith could no longer sustain her courage.

In December, in a letter to her sister, the last she ever wrote, she confessed that she was "trembling and afraid." Her "beloved friend," with his book finished, was without what he called "regular professional employment," preaching occasionally in vacant churches for a few dollars or for nothing, still hoping, despite his resignation and the Board's "dismission," that he might again be sent to the field where he had preached to kings and queens.

This was how he described Sybil's death in a letter to the secretary of the Board:

East Hampton, Feb. 28, 1848

Dear Brother:

The wife of my bosom, the youthful companion of my missionary life, is gone. And how shall I tell you the depth of my grief or convince of the extent to which I feel my bereavement. I have had some trials, labors and cares before, when she stood by me to share them, or to soothe or dispel my sorrows, but now I painfully know she will never repeat those kind offices for me, or extend to her children or to the heathen those kind, maternal, or missionary counsels so valuable to them.

But I would not murmur. It is the Lord's hand that touches me. He has taken away but what he gave, and I am bound to praise him, and think I do, that he allowed me to enjoy the rich gift so long.

He goes on to describe the course of her "multiplying maladies" and "excruciating troubles" over the last several months. She seemed most comfortable sitting in her rocking chair, the chair he had lovingly fashioned for her on their arrival in Honolulu twenty-eight years before—as a Vermont farm boy he had been handy with tools—and then brought back around Cape Horn. Now, as it became clear the end was near,

in accordance with her former request to be in her chair when God should send the summons, we placed her there, and sustained her head and hands and feet. I asked, how do you feel now, "I feel a little rested" (or "exhausted") not quite distinctly. I said again, "do you feel exhausted?" "Not as much as I should expect," she said, and soon repeated "Let His name be praised". "Be bold to speak the truth"—"The Lord cares for me"—then, in a low tone "Stop, Stop—I live." She took a spoonful of rice gruel. In a few minutes, toward nine o'clock—she said "Almost overcome" (sense ambiguous), then a few minutes later "Break the bonds." Then passed into a comatose state and spoke no more, but appeared to sleep.

The hours dragged along as the father and son and the two daughters, watched and waited, wanting the labored breathing to stop, yet shunning the thought. Lydia, thirteen years old, in her later account, shortened the time to "a few more throbbings of her loving heart" while "father prayed, commending her to God," and sang two verses of a hymn beginning:

Go, pilgrim, to thy Saviour;
On joyful wings ascend.

But in her father's letter to the Board he limited himself to this footnote:

*In this interval prayer was offered, hymns sung —
O where shall rest be found? Rest for the weary soul?
The dying pilgrim—(Sandwich Islands, page 501.)

and briefly concluded that she "entered into her rest." The prayers and hymns were no doubt for the sake of the children. The footnote was perhaps to remind the Board that his book was finally in print, and that in losing a missionary they had also lost a poet. The "Dying Pilgrim" was a hymn he had composed for the funeral of another missionary's wife some years before, and it was quoted in full—six verses of eight lines each—on the indicated page of his great work.

For Hiram, Jr., finally helping his father lift his mother out of the rocking chair, her death must have been deeply affecting. But he was young and strong. He finished his schooling at Williston, peddled the *Twenty-One Years* in his vacations (making as much as \$15 on a two-week circuit), and went on to Yale. With the passage of time the image of his mother was naturally idealized. A generation later, when he was urging his own son to carry on the work of spreading the gospel he wrote:

If ever there was in this world a woman who was noble, honest, generous, loving, tender-hearted and sympathetic, that woman was your grandmother, my own dear sainted mother; and how sincere was her belief in those doctrines which I hold to be essential to salvation, and to earnest whole-hearted service for our Lord Jesus.

Sybil was buried in the Williston family plot in the old cemetery not far from the Academy. The impoverished family were glad to accept continuing largesse from the button manufacturer, the friend of missions and mission families and of education. There was no money for a plot of their own, still less for a monument to her memory. Eventually Mr. Williston paid for a monument too, as I found out in my continuing search to find out why my father had been so concerned with where his grandmother was buried. The clue came in a letter his grandfather had written to Mr. Williston three years after her death, thanking him for taking care of the cost of an "extra nice and costly monumental article—a suitable and durable monument" to "that most precious wife and mother whose dear remains repose so securely under your kind protection and that of her unfailing Savior in your own peaceful family cemetery." But in the same letter he announced the prospect of a second Mrs. Bingham.

Naomi Emma Morse, the "very worthy lady, of suitable age, say 47" to whom he said he was engaged (actually she was nearer 50) came from the same part of Massachusetts as had Sybil. Like Sybil before her marriage, and like many another unmarried gentlewoman in her day, she was a school-teacher. In 1843, the same year young Hiram became a boarding student at Mr. Smith's academy for boys in New Haven, Miss Morse and her elder

widowed sister, Mrs. Mary Merrick, moved their Seminary for Young Ladies into a rented house on the North side of York Square (where the Yale Gymnasium now stands) in another part of the town. In the course of the five years Hiram spent at the "New Haven High School" before the family moved to Easthampton, his parents learned about the girls' school and its proprietors: in one of his mother's letters she asked him if he had been seeing Miss Morse and Mrs. Merrick, and in his last year at the High School his youngest sister, Lydia, became a student of Miss Morse's.

In an age when housework was not yet a male occupation, few men willingly remained widowers. It was natural for Sybil's husband to remarry, and all the more if Sybil had known and approved the new wife. Nothing in the record suggests that Hiram fell in love with Naomi. Aside from her worthiness, there were other reasons why she attracted him. In his letter to Mr. Williston, he described her as:

well adapted to elevate and refine society on a well cultivated missionary field, and give the finishing touches to the education of the daughters of missionaries, of merchants and chiefs at Honolulu, if we were quietly located there. But that is not to be just now. She does not think she ought to leave her school for it.

He was still cherishing his dream of a return "home" to the islands of his glory and his sacrifice. Not that he any longer had hopes of resuming his old position as self-appointed leader of the mission. He had even relinquished all claim to "his" church, with its 2000 member congregation and the vast stone edifice for which he had provided the plans, raised the money, and cajoled the chiefs into providing a thousand laborers, only to have his successor take the credit for completing the "new Solomon's temple." That had been thrashed out in a bitter exchange before his resignation and dismissal (each volley taking six months to reach its target), in which Hiram had thundered:

Lust of power may shake thrones. Usurpations and oppressions may jostle and agitate the institutions of men, but the kingdom of Christ is stable, and the relations of his churches and their pastors are not violently to be deranged.

A committee of the more worldly missionaries had confirmed his "supplanter," the Reverend Richard Armstrong, as permanent pastor and suggested to the Prudential Committee of the A.B.C.F.M. that if Mr. Bingham ever did return—hopefully in a more "accommodating and humble spirit"—he be assigned other duties, such as revising the Hawaiian translation of the Bible.

This had, of course, not been acceptable. Nor was the subsequent humiliating suggestion of Dr. Rufus Anderson, D.D., the Secretary of the Board, that he return as a "gospel laborer," dependent on Hawaiian piety rather than New England philanthropy.

There the matter might have rested if he had not conceived the idea of starting a school with Miss Morse. He even sounded out Dr. Anderson, as he wrote Mr. Williston:

I told Dr. Anderson, as he asked me of my plans, that I had now the prospect of going into a Boarding School enterprise in company with a lady. "With your daughter," said he, "No sir, but with the teacher of my daughter." I spent two nights and a day with him without his suspecting my intention of marriage.

With Dr. Anderson apparently no more enthusiastic than Naomi about the school project, he played his last card. He was willing, he wrote in a final appeal, to postpone his marriage for a year and half, if the Board would send him on a short-term assignment. He would make a tour of all the islands, and

revisit those missionary stations most of which I helped to establish, to come once more among the churches with the fulness of the blessings of the gospel, to proclaim salvation once more to the thousands thronging at the missionary stations.

The missionaries, the king and chiefs, the churches and people, I should hope, might be benefitted by my labors and counsels a few months. It would, I think, do the race of Hawaiian Christians good to welcome their old friend among them, and to greet me once more with the warm "*aloha*", and to receive this friendly right hand in return; and to hear from my lips not only the messages of the gospel, and the results of my experience, but the assurances of the love and fellowship of their fellow Christians in this country.

He did not want to be a "supernumerary," but neither was he aiming to be "an antagonist or rival among my brethren." The Board well knew his qualifications, which he modestly admitted had been "given him from above." It was perhaps fear of being thought too old—he was not sixty-two—that led him to boast a little about his courage.

Courage, which implies little or no merit, I had and still have in good measure. I felt it when thirty-two years ago I proposed to take the leap in the dark, and offered myself to the Board as the *first preacher* to carry the gospel to the Sandwich Islands, when no other preacher in the land was known to be willing to go thither. [Had he forgotten his brother, Asa Thurston?] I felt it too when I seized an angry chief there and delivered a white man out of his hand whom he was beating and kicking unmercifully, as I did also when in my youth I pricked with a bayonet a huge wounded bear in the night, and received the strike of his paw on my gun.

It was no use. Dr. Anderson was not open to this final appeal, however emotional.

Naomi, unfortunately, was in no hurry to offer him her bed and board. Perhaps she wanted to see how he would do as a business partner first. Yet the Seminary must have seemed increasingly like his home. Lydia was again one of Naomi's pupils. Her sister, Lucy, through school and engaged, was her assistant. Hiram, Jr., was a student at Yale, a few blocks away.

When they finally did get married a year later it was Naomi's brother-in-law, a minister in Richmond, Virginia, not one of Hiram's old missionary friends, who performed the ceremony. Though in his old role he had been dubbed, half jeeringly, half admiringly, "King Bingham," and he was now only a partner in an enterprise known as "Mr. and Mrs. Bingham's Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies," he had at last found some security.

And there he passed the sixteen years of life still left to him. The school continued for most of that time, until the Civil War eliminated the Southern clientele that provided northern seminaries with their margin of profit, and it had to close.

He went on attending meetings of the A.B.C.F.M. though they now paid little attention to him. With the school in difficulties, the Board voted him a pension of \$500 a year, and he wrote Mr. Williston a fulsome letter of thanks

for the \$100 he had contributed to the pension fund. He preached when he could "in vacant churches," which brought in a little extra money. For over a year he was acting pastor "for the Congregational colored people of this city," as he wrote his oldest daughter; but he did not know "how long I shall supply them, with what compensation they will feel able to give me." The Temple Street Church had a reputation as a "haven" for fugitive slaves. It does not appear whether he was aware of that, but with the coming of the Civil War he became a passionate supporter of the "cause of our Country and of Human Liberty."

There was some pride and satisfaction for the old man when, after the war, his daughter Lydia, having served as principal of Ohio Female College in Cincinnati, answered a call to start a girls' school in Honolulu, and there, across the street from the great stone church, she carried out the project he had once thought of for Naomi and himself.

The greatest event of his old age was his delivery of the "charge" at his son's ordination as a missionary. To have a son his successor in the mission field had long been his most cherished hope; if he were not to be permitted to return himself, he had long told the Board, he wanted his son to take his place.

III

Hiram, Jr., had shown some tendency to break loose as a college student. Despite his father's earlier expressions of disapproval, he let his hair grow long in the new fashion. (Later, in an even more marked assertion of independence, he grew a beard.) A daguerreotype taken in college, as well as his class-book picture, depicts a gentle, almost sensuous face, quite unlike his father's Vermont granite. He won renown for having kicked a football over the old Courthouse on the Green, a feat not before recorded. In one college vacation he paddled a canoe down the Connecticut River from the Canadian border, three hundred miles to Long Island Sound. His parents had worried from an early age, that "he does not often enough think of his Savior," and that he was growing up without being governed by "the principles and feelings of a renewed nature"—which presumably meant he did not at all times have a proper sense of guilt.

Yet his father continued to remind him that he was expected to carry on the missionary work, which for him had been so sadly interrupted, whether in Hawaii or farther out across the Pacific. In any case he must have impressed others with his seriousness, for upon his graduation from Yale he was offered the post of principal of the high school in Northampton.

By this time he had learned to call his stepmother "Ma." But on moving back to within half a dozen miles of where his "own dear sainted mother" lay, he was not likely to forget Sybil or her concern for his soul.

Even so, he might never have become a missionary if on the staff of the High School under his direction there had not been an even younger teacher named Minnie Brewster. She seemed as concerned with the state of her own

and others souls as Sybil had been. "In early youth she sought her Savior's love and united with the church at the same time with her father." So it was said when her life came to be written. But her father, Jonathan Brewster, known in Northampton as the "genial landlord" of the Mansion House hotel, had apparently not felt the need of his Savior's love until his daughter's persuasions.

She had graduated from Williston Academy a few years after young Hiram, and must have heard the affecting story of Sybil's death and perhaps even visited her grave in the Williston plot—if not before, then certainly after, she and Hiram became interested in each other. It takes no great flight of fancy to imagine the tall handsome young school principal on a Sabbath outing to his mother's grave, telling Minnie about his mother's sudden decision to marry and set sail around Cape Horn with the husband she had just met, on a mission to save heathen souls. And if Minnie's piety was sufficient to bring her father into the fold, it must have helped persuade Hiram that he owed his fellowman more than a career as a schoolmaster.

He was not immediately persuaded. At the end of that school year he had a chance to see something of the world and he took it. He went to Europe on a grand tour. The auspices were irreproachable and the opportunity would not come again. His father's oldest and most worldly friend, James Hunnewell, who had sailed on the *Thaddeus* with the pioneer missionaries in 1819, carrying not Bibles but five casks of rum and other merchandise, and ten years later had returned to Boston with the beginnings of a large fortune, now lived in Charlestown, and there the Bingham had frequently visited, when church or missionary business took them to Boston. Mr. Hunnewell saw in young Bingham, with a year of teaching behind him, a safe companion for his own son, James, Jr., whom he was sending on an educational trip to Europe. Hiram was engaged to go along as tutor, friend and moral guide. Hiram kept a journal, as was the custom. It began, piously enough, probably for his father's eyes, with a farewell to his "dear pupils . . . committing them to the hands of Providence, that God would guide their youthful steps and bring them to an eternal home," but with few pieties thereafter. His berth on the *Canada* required him "to make a slight kink in some part of my body." (He was six feet four.) James was seasick. Hiram permitted himself to play checkers, but not cards. Landing at Liverpool and going on to London he was awed by the splendors he saw: the Crown jewels, a nobleman's palace, Queen Victoria in her coach, the Crystal Palace ("grandest of all sights"), riders on Rotten Row. For his father's sake he visited a hospital for the aged, made a pilgrimage to the "abode" of his Mayflower ancestor, Elder William Brewster ("a man of property, but who adopted the views of the dissenters"), and attended Sabbath services. As to one sermon, he commented that the "arguments in favor of the Trinity were good." But for the rest he was open-mouthed: it was all "like a dream."

If young James Hunnewell caused him any trouble it does not appear. As decorous sightseers the two young men went on from England to do the Continent. After this three months glimpse of the great world Hiram was ready

to do what his father wanted. He entered Andover Theological Seminary, as his father had, to prepare for a missionary career.

Rebellion there must have been. His eyes bothered him. He developed respiratory and digestive troubles. In the second year of his course of study in Greek, Hebrew and homiletics he left Andover and showed up in New Haven. He seemed to have "broken down," as his father wrote Mr. Williston, under an attack of

bronchitis and dyspepsia. He cannot sing and must speak with a low voice. He does not go out of the house—and cannot expect to earn anything, and we fear he must relinquish his favorite profession.

His father, of course, had no doubt what that profession was: "He has ardently longed to be a missionary."

If it was rebellion, it was soon stamped out. The Brewster girl probably helped. So did a few months of outdoor work on a farm. And before the year was out he had begun to match if not surpass his father's achievements: within a span of twenty-five days his father had been ordained, married and sailed from Boston as a missionary to the heathen of the remote Pacific. Hiram Bingham II accomplished the same in twenty-three days.

The ordination took place in New Haven, with the President of Yale offering prayer, and his father accepting him for the A.B.C.F.M. as a "fellow servant of Jesus Christ." He was married in Northampton, November 18, 1856, to Minerva Clarissa Brewster (henceforth no longer to be known as Minnie, which gave recognition to a heathen goddess as well as her father's first wife, but as Clara, after her mother). And together they sailed from Boston, December 2, 1856, bound, via Cape Horn, not for the Sandwich Islands, only 18,000 miles away, but for the Gilbert Islands in Micronesia, 2,500 miles farther.

They did spend a few months in Hawaii, while their ship, the *Morning Star*, first of a series of mission ships of that name, went off first to take supplies to the Marquesas mission. Hiram was pressed to stay and take charge of his father's great stone church, but that would not have satisfied the urge to be as much a pioneer as his father. Hawaii was no longer at the edge of the known world. Even mail to and from New England went by way of California and the pony express in a matter of weeks instead of months. His father, learning of the offer to take over his old church, left the decision to his son. But the news that Clara was pregnant disturbed him: remembering the terror of acting the part of midwife for Sybil, he pled with his son to wait, arguing that God did not require that Clara should have her baby on a savage island unattended.

The young couple, having given their lives to the Lord's service, were not deterred, and when the *Morning Star* was ready to sail they were aboard.

Their first windfall in Micronesia served to remind Hiram of his father's encounters with heathen "degradation." As the hermaphrodite brig sailed slowly by the first inhabited island, a man in a canoe paddled out to greet the visitors: his "constant theme," as Hiram wrote in his first report back to Boston, "was that there were 'waininini' (women) on shore. This, our first

interview with the heathen made us long to tell them of the blessed Savior." Hiram was to spend the rest of his life trying to convey the Gospel message to those heathen, and his response to the man in the canoe was symbolic; he wrote a letter, in English, hoping someone on shore might translate it, in these words:

Morning Star, Aug. 29, 1857

To the Inhabitants of Menchikoff Island:

Glad tidings! "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth; good will toward men." "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life."

We hope soon to bring you the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and some of his missionaries to teach you.

Very truly yours,

HIRAM BINGHAM, JR.

Missionary to Micronesia

As he entered on his missionary labors he brought, as his father had before him, not only the Gospel message but western civilization, and he had no doubt about the relevance of either. During the next forty years of his life, along with much preaching, he was to give the Gilbertese a written language, and books, and schools. He translated the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, and in that, too, he would outdo his father, whose contribution to the Hawaiian Bible was only that of one among many. Yet he must have wondered sometimes, and particularly when he dropped the "Jr." from his name upon his father's death, just where one Hiram Bingham left off and another began.

Clara, too, may often have felt Sybil as a daily presence. Not that she would think in terms of emulating Sybil's large brood of children. But as she and Hiram and the Bible and a book on midwifery were dropped off at Apaiang, it was comforting to think that Sybil had successfully borne her first child with only her husband in attendance. At any rate, as she watched the *Morning Star* sail out of the lagoon, she kept her fears to herself.

Two months later the baby they had decided to call after Clara's Mayflower ancestor, William Brewster, was born. He never breathed. Hiram took the tiny body by night to bury in a secret spot which they would keep to themselves. For the Tarawans were readying a sanguinary invasion of Apaiang, and cannibalistic rites were not unknown.

Clara was not delivered of another baby for almost eighteen years. That baby was my father, Hiram Bingham III, and, thanks to a near miracle, a doctor attended his birth. It was also almost a miracle that he was not born a posthumous child. For, during that pregnancy, the lives of two Hiram Bingham hung in the balance.

Missionaries to tropical lands, at least in our family, suffered from a common health hazard, referred to as a "bilious affection," more often as "dyspepsia." Diagnosis at this date is difficult. Intestinal disorders such as dysentery are still common in the tropics. But the Bingham missionaries, father and son, seem to have had recurring bowel disorders even when in New England, and

the emotional stress of a continual guilty conscience may well have been a factor. On at least two occasions my grandfather was wracked and prostrated and near death.

The first was six years after he and Clara had set up the frame house—they called it “Happy Home”—that had come with them to Apaiang on the *Morning Star*. The times were turbulent and perilous. The kings of Apaiang and Tarawa fought their bloody battles, up to the very doorstep of the Happy Home. Open hostility to the missionaries was less of a problem than total incomprehension. The “heathen jargon” of the “savages” was difficult enough to master. Even more baffling were their manners and morals.

A later resident of the Gilbert Islands with some cultural anthropology behind him, could describe them as

peopled by a race who, despite the old savagery of their wars and grimness born of their endless battle with the sea, were princes in laughter and friendship, poetry and love.

Hiram could only see

their extremely immodest manners and customs, their great licentiousness, their unbounded lying, their covetousness, theft, warlike spirit and bloody warfare, their ignorance of a final judgment, of heaven and hell, of Jesus Christ.

It was no wonder if conversions were slow in coming, and the Binghamms were often near despair. A notebook for recording “Christians” lists only four in those first years. Yet they would have persevered if they could. The long black coat and top hat he wore on the way to preach in his almost empty palm-thatched church on a Sunday only accentuated the gauntness of his towering frame. When, with increasingly frequent and severe bouts of intestinal pain, his weight finally reached 128 pounds, his strength was gone, and he looked, as he wrote his sister Lydia, like a skeleton, he felt death not far off.

The *Morning Star* appeared just in time, on that occasion and took them back to Honolulu. After two years of slow recovery there and in New England—not idle, however, for they were working on reducing the Gilbertese language to writing and beginning translation of the Gospels—they were ready for another voyage. This time, when they sailed from Boston for the long journey around the Horn, Hiram was not merely a “Reverend” but a “Reverend Captain” (which struck his sister Lizzie as funny), for he was the master of the second *Morning Star*.

The ship was used to maintain contact between a dozen mission stations in the Marshall, Caroline and Gilbert Islands, an area as large as the continental United States. Hiram continued as captain for a year after reaching the Pacific. But for the time being his main job was translating the New Testament. Clara translated hymns and helped his sister Lydia in a school for Hawaiian girls. They made three trips through the islands of Micronesia on *Morning Star II* and its successor, *Morning Star III*, with only brief visits to their “Happy Home.”

The Gilberts were still islands of violence and misery. Progress in civilization, whether from the standpoint of church or school, seemed infinitesimal. The Hawaiian evangelists, who had kept the mission alive, were given to backsliding. A mob once burned the mission buildings. The little church was said to be used for prostitution. The secret grave of the Bingham's first-born was dug up and desecrated.

Believing as they did in the power of the word, and particularly of the printed word, once they had the New Testament in print, as well as a hymn book and a few school texts—the first literature ever produced in the Gilbertese language—they were ready to try another stint as resident missionaries. They returned to Apaiang determined to achieve for these turbulent islands what the earlier Bingham's had done for Hawaii.

For almost two years they labored, before nature once more took a hand. They preached, organized a school, a women's group, always under the fear of violence. Murders were frequent. But their gentleness and persistence began to bring results. The notebook showed twenty joining the church in 1874, and in the first few months of 1875 there were seven more.

But Hiram's old intestinal troubles began to recur. And Clara's diary began to reflect a new concern about her own condition. His illness and her incredible pregnancy came to her awareness almost simultaneously. Here are some entries:

Feb. 21. Darling suffered from severe dyspepsia.

Feb. 22. Our largest air plant is crowned with many buds which are just beginning to open into very pretty flowers.

Feb. 23. The little kitties grow cunning and pretty every day. They are very playful.

Feb. 24. Afternoon meeting, darling was very good on "gentleness."

Feb. 25. Usual school and other duties. We went out for a walk through the woods up to Tabouteba—picked sweet flowers. Caterpillars are plenty at T., and have eaten all the green from the grass on dear baby's grave.

Feb. 26. My darling had a better night than usual. His old difficulties are hanging about him. May the good Father spare him.

Mar. 10. Darling is quite poorly this month.

Mar. Afternoon meeting for those who wish to unite with the church. Over twenty were there. About ten may be received. Came home very tired. Darling was nervously weary.

Mar. 24. I am not very well these days. Is past experience to be repeated, or is it something else? I cannot tell.

Mar. 28. My darling was taken with great pains which continued at intervals.

Mar. 29. Darling was pretty weak and miserable all day. Did not come down at noon or evening. Is it a return of eleven years ago?

By the beginning of April she knew it was "something new" (had there been miscarriages before?) and they began to wrestle with their consciences. Only his breakdown could justify their leaving.

Apr. 1. Darling not so well. If only I were real strong and vigorous how glad we would be, but I *must not* be much on my feet these days.

Apr. 2. Weakness and often pain and depression are my loved one's portion. How like 1864.

Apr. 5. Capt. Daly's "Lady Alicia" came to anchor near Teirio before dark.

Apr. 6. Very light wind and the vessel could not get up to her anchorage. No special change in my darling for the better. My prayers are for his restoration. *The work is great—the workers few.*

Apr. 11. Dearest suffered all the afternoon, sweating and then pain. I try to "cast my burdens on the Lord"—but where is the path of duty?

Apr. 12. A question presses upon us this morning. Shall we seek passage somewhere with Capt. Daly? strong reasons say yes—and almost as strong—no. At first the Capt. said impossible, but he came in the afternoon and the matter was fully talked over, but we could not then decide. Capt. D. was willing to "do the best he could" for us.

Unfortunately the little *Lady Alicia*, a tiny trading ship, was still to complete her cargo of copra, and then would head for Sydney, in the wrong direction. They decided to wait. Perhaps the *Morning Star*, though not due for months, would come in time to take them back to Honolulu. Meanwhile the big signal flag, made of four white sheets bearing the word WELCOME in black letters, was atop a pole on the tallest coconut tree, and might be seen by a trader bound north for Hawaii. "Devoted natives in relay shifts," as she later told the story, kept watch in the top of the tree for a sail.

Finally on a "Sabbath," May 16th, when Hiram was "so poorly" they did not go to church, "a fine, large, three-masted vessel" was "announced," and seemed headed their way. Hiram had "much pain in the afternoon." The wind was very light, the reefs at the entrance to the lagoon were treacherous, and the ship did not make their anchorage till late the next day. She was a "nice vessel" with a "very pleasant" captain, bound, after stops at some other islands, for Samoa, "where are physicians and milk."

Hiram, she wrote, was "excessively nervous and in severe pain. It seems as if he must have a change, or fail utterly. His life is surely worth saving for the work he can do for the blessed Master." They decided to accept the passage offered, even if this, too, was in the wrong direction.

Two days later they "left the dear, dear Happy Home; when, oh when to enter it again" (never, as it turned out), amid "much sobbing" and expressions of "tender love we have not been accustomed to see among our Gilbert Island people."

Hiram felt better for awhile, and they went ashore on Little Makin Island when the ship put in at Butaritari, and for a week, while the vessel was trading goods for copra, they stayed with Maka, a Hawaiian fellow missionary.

Maka, and his admiration for Hiram, were described a dozen years later when Robert Louis Stevenson came that way in search of health. "I have never known a more engaging creature than this parson of Butaritari," wrote Stevenson in *The South Seas*.

He had the morning cheerfulness of birds and healthy children, and his humor was infectious. We were next neighbors and met daily, yet our salutations lasted minutes at a stretch—shaking hands, slapping shoulders, capering like a pair of Merry-Andrews, laughing to split our sides upon some pleasantry that would scarce raise a titter in an infant-school.

That was Maka on weekdays, but his Sabbath appearance must have been patterned after Hiram's:

On that day we made a procession to the church: Maka, a blot on the hot landscape in tall hat, black frock-coat, black trousers; under his arm the hymn-book and the Bible; in his face a reverent gravity:—beside him Mary his wife, a quiet, wise, and handsome elderly lady, seriously attired:—myself following with singular and moving thoughts. . . . To see him weekly flogging a dead horse and blowing a cold fire was a lesson in fortitude and constancy.

Stevenson must have known who had produced Maka's hymn book and Bible, and his later impression of Apaiang suggest Hiram and Clara had had more of an effect than they knew:

Apaiang, the most Christianized of all these islands, where excellent Mr. Bingham lived and labored and has left golden memories; whence all education in the northern Gilberts traces its descent, and where we were boarded by little native Sunday-school misses in clean frocks, with demure faces, and singing hymns as to the manner born.

Even a hundred years later, it might be added, Gilbertese children are listening to the reading of Mr. Bingham's Bible and singing Mrs. Bingham's hymns, and those who continue their education do so in the "Hiram Bingham High School" on Beru Island.

But in 1875, Clara was recording Hiram's ship-board agonies in her diary, and ignoring her own condition, during a long month of beating South between Makin and Samoa. Toward the end they both began to doubt whether Hiram could make it to Apia alive. If he died, he told the captain, he did not want to be buried at sea, but rather, he hoped, in Apia. They did make it. Hiram on a mattress and a board was hoisted by block and tackle overside to a mission doctor's boat, and they found a respite ashore in the doctor's home.

The diagnosis: "no evidence of organic disease but of great nervous prostration and want of tone in the whole system, especially in the bowels."

Two weeks later Clara, for the first time, dared to put in her diary a direct reference to her own condition. She felt "two distinct throbs which sent a bound of joy through my heart." But Hiram is still bed-ridden and she feels miserable. "Oh, my heavenly Father," she prays, "take me in thine arms and help me. I am very weak. How can I do all I need to do and be."

She mentions the arrival—and departure—of vessels, but none headed their way. The weeks go by. The doctor thinks Hiram is well enough to travel. They have a chance to go to Sydney where there are steamers for Hawaii. But that would mean nine thousand miles of ocean instead of three. "Can it be that we shall be in Honolulu before the close of the year?" She counts the months. The baby is due in November. It is now September.

They decided to take a ship to Fiji, whence it should be possible to make New Zealand, and from there, perhaps, Honolulu. By September 15th they are at Levuka, a Fiji Island port, where they learn that the barque, *Prospector*, will sail for Auckland in two weeks. They take passage. Clara agonized:

It is not likely that we shall reach Honolulu for some time. May the Lord direct and care for us. I do not feel very well equal to the task that is before me—but what can I

do? My love "requires a change of climate" to reinstate his health, and I must go—trusting in the kind Father to keep me and my treasure safe from all harm.

Going aboard the *Prospector* she wrote she had never felt "*more forlorn.*"

Our room was far too short for dear H. but he was allowed to take a longer berth. . . . A gentleman, Mr. Burwitt, took the upper berth in my room.

By now only too obviously pregnant, she must have felt her morals safe, and "I could not have my poor darling cramped up in the short berth."

A fellow passenger died and was buried at sea. A "terrific gale" hit them and they were "under very short sail for many hours. Oh, it was fearful." October 14th they landed in Auckland. Missionary friends had heard they were coming and took them to a lodging house. Doctors were consulted. They found Hiram had "atrophy of the liver and enlargement of the spleen." What they may have found as to her condition, now eight months pregnant, she does not say, but they thought Honolulu was as good a climate for Hiram's recovery as New Zealand.

Two more weeks went by. On October 29th they boarded the *Mikado* for Honolulu. "H. walked from carriage to our room without help."

There is one more entry in the diary:

Nov. 8th. We have entered upon our 12th day, and *if the Lord will*, we hope to be in Honolulu sometime next Friday,—The Lord will provide.

Friday morning Oahu was in view. Some hours later they saw Hiram's sister Lizzie on the dock. "Friends came on board, and best of all, our good old physician responded to my note by coming on board and helping us get ashore." Hiram had to be helped to walk. A room was provided in the mission school for girls, now under Lizzie's direction.

Six days later "about 7 in the evening, pains began." It was their nineteenth wedding anniversary. Clara duly chronicled the event:

About 9½ we sent by Charlie C. for Mrs. Morgan and also a note to Dr. S. Both came before eleven. Dr. got a rest for awhile in E.'s room. At half past 2 Mrs. M. called the Dr., and at quarter past 3 my heart was filled with wonderful love and joy at hearing the cries of my precious darling child, a fine baby boy. Everything went on well—except I had too little milk for my darling—which almost broke my heart. I must not forget to mention the coming in of the dear papa to see the baby boy in the morning about 10 o'clock.

IV

Though the first Hiram had died six years before, his powerful figure, and that of the sainted Sybil, loomed over his tiny namesake, the third Hiram. Kawaiahao Female Seminary, where my father was born, was across the street from the original mission buildings and the church that was his grandfather's great monument. His boyhood was spent surrounded by reminders of the power and the piety of the pioneer missionaries.

From Kawaiahao the family moved into a home provided for them on the old Bingham Tract at Punahou, in the lower end of Manoa Valley. The

original 224-acre tract had been given to the first Hiram at the behest of Queen Kaahumanu fifty years before. All gifts to missionaries then were considered common mission property, but the Queen had built a thatched cottage for the Bingham, which Hiram improved, and Sybil always thought of it as "home." She supervised the building of a wall to keep out roaming cattle, and started a 20-acre sugar-cane and banana plantation for the support of the church, and, a half-century later, the night-blooming cereus she planted along the wall was still there, a block away from the new Bingham home, to remind the third Hiram of Sybil's good works. The site of the original cottage had been absorbed into the grounds of the school for the children of the missionaries, and title to the rest of the land had been released to the Mission Board by the original grantees.

Gilbertinia, as the new Bingham home was named, stood on Alexander Street in the lower part of the Punahou tract. (Today a four-lane expressway passes a block away, and a large sign bears the legend: Exit to Bingham Street.) The A.B.C.F.M., which was paying Hiram's meager salary, made the lot available, and its local supporters raised money for the house.

The largest contribution came from Mrs. Juliette Montague Cooke. She had known Sybil when she and Amos, her husband, members of the Eighth Company of missionaries, had started a school for Hawaiian chiefs. A dozen years later Amos and a colleague, Samuel Castle, had resigned from the mission and had gone into business together, and it was the phenomenal success of their firm, Castle & Cooke, that now enabled Amos's widow to make a generous donation toward providing a home for the penniless and invalided Gilbertese missionaries.

As a boy, my father could never be allowed to forget that while other missionary families might be rich, his family had renounced riches for nobler and purer goals.

His father labored at his translation of the Old Testament, working from a Hebrew text. His mother worked on Bible readings for prayer meetings and school books for Gilbertese children—an arithmetic, a reader, geographies. His aunts Lizzie and Lydia came to live with them. Lizzie had been christened Elizabeth Kaahumanu Bingham at the time the Queen Regent was Sybil's friend and patron, and perhaps that heathen strain accounted for the fact that she was the only member of the household with a sense of humor, and she taught her nephew how to play checkers and backgammon. Cards were, of course, tabu. Lydia, late in life, had married a redoubtable old missionary, the Reverend Titus Coan, and at his death, which soon followed, she joined her family, and her rustling black dress and sweetly solemn mien became a permanent aspect of Gilbertinia.

She, of course, assumed, as did his parents, that Hiram III would follow in the footsteps of Hiram I and Hiram II. He never got over the titters that went up when he first attended school and announced that his name was "Hiram T'ird." It did not help that about the time he entered Punahou the trustees were naming a new building "Bingham Hall."

Like many another unhappy teen-ager, he ran away from home: with

dreams of rising from newsboy to wealthy philanthropist, he took passage on a steamer from San Francisco, but the steamer's departure was delayed, he was missed at school, a schoolmate gave him away, and his father found and brought him home. Family friends were aghast, but his parents, however shocked and horrified, treated him with new consideration. Even the rod, which up till then had not been spared, was not used again.

Money, or rather the want of it, was of chronic concern. One of his grievances was that the pennies he earned doing chores at home or for neighbors, were not his to spend, but, after suitable deductions for the Lord's work, were put aside for his education. That he should have withdrawn all his savings from the bank on his daring escapade was a particularly heinous aspect of his relapse from grace. Presumably his father got a refund of the passage money, and the education fund continued its slow growth.

Education, in the Calvinist tradition of missionary families, was almost as important as godliness. The Hawaiian mission had its origin on the steps of a Yale building when Obookiah, the Hawaiian waif, was given refuge, taught to read the Bible, and inspired the pious to a concern for the souls of his people. A number of the missionaries had studied at Yale, and their sons and grandsons went there as a matter of course. So when Hiram Bingham II, of the Yale Class of 1853, took his family on a long planned trip to the mainland to see about the publication of his completed Bible, he decided that young Hiram, then sixteen, should transfer from Punahou to a school in New England and there complete his preparation for Yale.

Since his parents had both attended Williston Academy, in Easthampton, that was their first choice. Easthampton was near Springfield, where Clara's mother, and her brother Henry and his family, lived, and there were other family connections of the Brewsters, Moseleys and Bingham in the area. But Samuel Williston, the old missionary benefactor, had died when they were still at Apaiang, and when they made a pilgrimage to Sybil's grave in the Williston plot in the cemetery, even that seemed not the same: her modest marble slab was overshadowed by a huge new monument to the memory of the philanthropic button-manufacturer.

They decided on Phillips Academy at Andover instead. The fact that both Hiram I and Hiram II had studied at the nearby Theological Seminary seemed to make it appropriate. So, in the late spring of 1892, Hiram III was deposited at Andover to take exams for entry into the Academy in the fall, while his parents settled down in New York for the arduous task of seeing the Gilbertese Bible into print.

The last verse of the Bible had been translated two years before, in a little ceremony, duly photographed, with young Hiram, in a chastened mood after his escapade, behind his father's shoulder, and mission officials and members of the family standing in the background. Thereafter, with meticulous care, the whole translation had had to be reviewed and corrected, which took another two years, before it was ready for formal presentation to the Rev. Dr. E. W. Gilman, Corresponding Secretary of the American Bible Society, which was to publish it, at the Bible House in New York. A month later, having left their

son at Andover, Hiram and Clara began reading the proof sheets of the first chapter of Genesis as they came from the composing room.

Day after day and month after month Hiram and Clara strained their eyes to make sure that any mistakes of the typesetters, who of course knew nothing of the language, were corrected. Hiram estimated there were 3,350,000 letters and 120,000 punctuation marks to check, and as a Biblical scholar, he could state exactly rather than in round numbers, that there were 31,173 verses. A year later, and again with due ceremony, the work was finished. As the *New York Times* reported:

The last verse of the last chapter of Revelation was put in type. A proof was taken and carefully examined by Mr. Bingham, who then read the verse aloud in the Gilbert Islands tongue, his voice trembling with emotion. After a prayer of thanksgiving had been offered by the gray-haired missionary, the doxology was sung and remarks were made by Mrs. Bingham and others.

The event marked the end of thirty-four years' conflict with almost insurmountable difficulties on the part of Rev. Hiram Bingham, the famous missionary.

His work, of course, was not finished. He still had to prepare a Gilbertese-English dictionary, without which the people whose language he had reduced to writing would have only limited access to the world's store of knowledge. That would take another dozen years, for after the first manuscript was ready for the printer it was lost by a careless messenger, and had to be all done a second time.

But the dictionary could be done in Honolulu, and the Bingham family had no intention of spending another winter in the cold north. Hiram's ever chronic health problems had recurred, and now with his Bible finished, he underwent major surgery, long postponed. Then, in June, he went to New Haven, and at a Yale Commencement ceremony, with classmates at their 30th reunion applauding, he was accorded a recognition his father had never attained, the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

A block from the ceremonies in the College Chapel was his father's grave. If he visited the cemetery he must have thought of that formidable parent, perhaps now for the first time, with more sympathy than awe.

Whether it was on that occasion or subsequently there is no record, but the feeling grew that his mother's remains should not lie so far from his father's.

At any rate he was now ready to turn toward home. Young Hiram, with his first year at Andover behind him, joined his parents and went with them as far as Chicago to visit relatives and take in the World's Fair. From then on the record of what was done about Sybil's bones is to be found only in the letters from her grandson that her son so carefully preserved.

The first reference is in his last letter from Andover, written three days before his graduation.

Hiram Bingham III with his four oldest sons.

Left to right: Hiram IV, Charles Tiffany, Woodbridge, Alfred.

Courtesy of Alfred M. Bingham. Reproduction by Gordon Sweet.



Andover, Mass. June 18, 1894.

My dear father,

Many thanks for yours of the 23rd of May and the enclosed check. I thank you for trusting me with so large an amount at one time. I hope I shall not have occasion to use it until I get to Springfield and then I would like to deposit it in the bank. I have been able to earn about \$35.00 this past term, made up as follows: tutoring geometry \$27.00, tutoring algebra \$.75, collecting grand-stand fees \$7.50. I wish you could be here June 21st, to hear your son make his debut on the commencement stage. I think there are to be only ten speakers. I hope Uncle Henry will be able to be here. How proud I would be if you and mama were to be in the audience.

Then, after mention of a girl he met at the "Wellesley Float" and apologies for writing "so short a letter, but I am very tired and have to get up early," he remembers his father's letter. So he takes another sheet for a postscript:

P.S. Before I go to bed I must reply to your letter. All you say about the removal of my grandmother's remains from East Hampton to New Haven is right. At present I am very busy, and will be during the early part of the summer vacation. Probably during the early part of September I will be able to have everything done as you would like. I am glad that you have trusted me with this.

As a vacation job which he hoped would net him \$100 he had signed up as a traveling book salesman canvassing a Pennsylvania territory to sell a volume entitled *What Can a Woman Do?* The enterprise was not a commercial success, and it ended with what he said a doctor called "a catarrhal condition of the bowels caused by the intense heat, too much change of drinking water and nervous prostration caused by and due to the nature of my business," and what another doctor, back at his uncle's in Springfield, after he had "got scared about myself and bolted for home" told him might be appendicitis. The doctor

looked rather grave but said little and put me on a rather queer diet. "Nothing for forty-eight hours." "No, nothing, except brandy and water." "*No! not a thing!*" By Sunday night I was fearfully and awfully hungry—and still the famine lasted. He, the M.D., came to the rescue Monday noon, but only placed milk, eggs and toast on the "free list."

By Tuesday he was well enough to remember what he had been asked to do, and he wrote the sexton of the Grove Street Cemetery to prepare for the reburial of his grandmother's remains next to his grandfather's.

It was getting near the end of August, and he had promised his father to have the matter attended to no later than September. But there were difficulties. He received a letter from Nathan H. Sanford, the Secretary and Treasurer of the New Haven City Burial Ground.

New Haven, Ct., Aug. 28/94

Mr. Hiram Bingham, Jr.

Your letter of 21st inst. to Mr. Hickman, our Sexton, has been handed to me. There is no space for a burial in the United Society (North Church) burial lot, on the North side of Rev. Hiram Bingham's grave, it being close on to the north boundary line of said lot. At the south side of his grave is an unmarked grave, that I assume contains his second wife; this body that you wish to bring here, would have to be buried south of and next to this grave of second wife.

He went on to explain that digging up a body in summer would not be allowed in Connecticut, though it might be in Massachusetts, and in any case a zinc-lined pine box 3 feet long and two feet wide would have to be procured at a cost of about \$9.00. He further stated that the approval of the church whose lot it was must be obtained.

So young Hiram, recovered in health and beginning to enjoy his vacation, took time out during a visit to some cousins of his in Holyoke, to move the project along. He wrote the church, and, combining business with the attractions of "driving, playing tennis, calling on Katherine's young lady friends, etc. etc.," he drove over to Easthampton, seven miles away, and "got permission for the removal, and made arrangements with an undertaker for other particulars."

He reported all these events to his father, and told of receiving a discouraging letter from a representative of the church in New Haven, which he enclosed, but ended on a more cheerful note with an account of a "very fashionable full dress dinner party" where he had had a "very pleasant time."

The letter from the church, written by an old friend of the family, a Mrs. Champion, seemed to Hiram as good an excuse as any "why nothing has been done this Summer." It read as follows:

My dear Mr. Bingham:

Your letter came this morning. I have been to see Mr. Sanford. He says that the sexton is in error as to space on the north side of your grandfather's grave, and I have just come from the cemetery where we looked at the lot. There is not over six inch space.

She went on to say that any new grave would have to be on the "south side of the second Mrs. B's grave" and permission of the church committee "may not so easily be gained."

For while the other space would never have been granted to anyone except to be used by your grandmother, she was in no way connected with our church, and the lot is for the church people who have no other burial spot. If the church gives space for a third grave coming toward the center of the lot I am not sure but your Father and Aunts would have to be consulted. Mrs. B. No. 2 could be moved and put No. 1 between Mr. B. and No. 2.

Mrs. Champion, out of delicacy perhaps, refrained from mentioning that "Mr. B" himself had never been a member of that church, always retaining his membership in the church in Honolulu, and that it was because of the membership of Naomi, "Mrs. B No. 2," that he had been buried in the lot in the first place. However, Hiram's Aunt Lydia had joined the church when she taught at Naomi's school, and Mrs. Champion, who knew her, was sure she "wanted her Mother to lie next to her Father." So she hoped for a favorable decision.

The next letter in the manuscript collection, written two days before my father had to be at Yale for the beginning of his freshman year, tells the final grim details.

Springfield, Sept. 24, 1894

My dear Father:

Last Saturday I went to Easthampton and shall try to give you a full account of all I did. I went directly to the undertaker's, Mr. Henry F. Pomeroy [Sybil's mother had been a Pomeroy, so this was probably a cousin]. We drove to the house of Deacon Ansel Lyman to get his permit for the removal. He was in the meadows digging potatoes, but stopped long enough to write a permit which I supposed would be O.K. Mr. Pomeroy, however, said I would make myself liable to a fine of \$50.00 unless I secured a permit from the Board of Health. By the time I had found this out it was time for dinner.

I dined at the Mansion House, a very good hotel just across the river from where you used to live.

After dinner I went to the Town Clerk's Office to get the record, which he kindly made out for me, of the facts of the first death and burial. Then Mr. Pomeroy drove me to the express office to see what the charges would be if remains were sent by express. They don't carry a body for less than \$5.00. This seemed rather steep, for I could go to New Haven and take the body with me for twice the first class fare, or \$3.30, in the baggage car.

The thought occurred to me that it might be sent by freight. But the Freight Companies refused to take it, because no valuation could be placed on the remains and in case they were lost or went astray I could sue the R.R. Co. for any amount.

Finally one of the ticket agents came to my relief. Since I had a ticket to Springfield he would send remains to New Haven in the baggage car for one regular fare, i.e. \$1.65. He was also the Board of Health Agent, so I left with him a 1st class ticket to New Haven and the govt. permit.

All of this required a lot of driving about and talk. Mr. Pomeroy was very good, however, and knew just whom to see and what to do. After this had all been fixed we drove to the Main St. Cemetery. He had provided a suitable box 3 ft. x 16 in. x 18 in., and had his man ready to make the exhumation.

The next page of the letter was marked "*Private*", and it is clear that young Hiram was concerned at upsetting his invalid mother (then showing the first symptoms of the shaking palsy that ended her life nine years later), and his aging aunts.

What follows you may not care to read aloud or have anyone else read, but I will write fully as I would tell you about it with all due reverence to the honored dead.

After digging down about three feet through a sandy soil we came upon the remains. They lay together directly in front of the stone. There was no trace of any box or container of any sort except two old fashioned brass handles which were probably on the coffin. The bones were all together. The skull, leg bones and ribs were all within a few inches of each other. We looked very carefully for traces of a box but found none. The bones had very evidently been taken out and laid in this hole without much ceremony. There were more remains than I had expected to find. The gravedigger searched very thoroughly, and I believe that all of the remains that lay there were safely removed. From the condition of the soil the burial was probably made about 17 or 18 years ago. Mr. Samuel Williston died about 20 years ago, and it is the opinion of Mr. Pomeroy that the removal was made at the time that the lot was graded and Mr. Williston's monument erected. The probability is that whatever remained there was quietly removed to this lot which no one seems to own.

Mrs. Champion has doubtless written you what we decided to do. I spent last Thursday in New Haven and talked the matter over again with her. As the remains will not reach New Haven until the latter part of this week I will be there to attend to everything.

The letter closes with a report of what he has spent to furnish his college room. He has bought a "very nice iron bedstead, with woven wire springs" for \$4.95 and "hair mattress all new" for \$3.70 and goes on to explain the low price:

It is a regular \$7.00 mattress but of special size 6'4" × 3", and was a special bargain which I happened to get at an immense drygoods store. It was made to order for them for a lady. She wanted something larger, and they wanted to get rid of the mattress.

The next letter was written after College had begun. Sybil's bones were not on his mind. Yale was "fine, great, grand," but he was "green as grass" and at the first Chapel service he had, to his horror, violated an ancient tradition by bowing to "Prexy" upon his entrance: "Only Seniors do." But two weeks later there is this brief note:

Mrs. Champion has settled all the bills in regard to the removal. The stone has been cleaned and well set up. Mrs. Champion showed me the epitaph which you made out for the unmarked grave (Naomi's). It seemed to me that the word "relict" is obsolete. By the way, Mrs. C. has made us a present of a very pretty sofa pillow.

Obviously Mrs. Champion had not secured permission of her committee to move Naomi. But Sybil was only a few feet from her "beloved friend" instead of sixty miles. And I had solved the mystery of her last resting place.

What I have not yet solved is what happened to the "costly monumental article," the stone of finest Vermont marble, her Hiram had ordered, Mr. Williston had paid for, and her grandson had had moved to its new location. The present sexton denies any knowledge. Perhaps it was not as "well set up" as my father thought. But at least I know now that it was there when he first showed me the graves.